**Sermons**

[Love the Stranger](http://willoughbychurch.com/sermons/2012-09-06-love-the-stranger)

[The Festivals](http://willoughbychurch.com/sermons/2012-02-23-the-festivals) (re: radical inclusion at the heart of festivals)

**Children’s Message**

(see also [Skits](http://www2.crcna.org/site_uploads/uploads/cpd/RefugeeToolkit/Refugee%20skits.pdf))

Jesus was a refugee. Paul had to flee for his life. Naomi left home because of a famine. Elijah ran from an angry ruler. Any of these stories can be windows into the refugee experience for kids…and entire congregations! Contemporary stories of the refugee experience help us walk a mile in a refugee’s shoes and hear the biblical call to welcome the stranger’s particular echo in our context today.

Here are a few ideas to consider, using one of these [children’s books](http://www2.crcna.org/site_uploads/uploads/cpd/RefugeeToolkit/Refugee%20children%27s%20books.docx):

•Use a few images from the book you are reading to the children in ***a few PowerPoint slides*** so that adults can see what you are talking about

•Use some ***costumes or props*** to help children engage in the story i.e. “Four Feet, Two Sandals”, bring a pair of flip flops like in the story

•Include a ***prayer or a poem*** from one of the books i.e. “Let There Be Peace: Prayers from around the World”

•Share ***one image*** (a powerful one!) from a children’s book and talk about how the people must feel in the picture, why they think this, what the colours are telling us about the mood on the situation, etc.

•Tell ***an abbreviated version*** of the written text while still showing all the images of a children’s book (can move through the book more quickly and simply in this way)

**Scripture Passages**

Below is a long list of scripture passages relevant to refugee work. Although it is not exhaustive, it will get you started. Use them in a bulletin announcement, on a poster, in the workshop, in a Bible study, or for personal devotions. The Bible speaks clearly about God’s expectations of us and our relationships with our refugee brothers and sisters.

*Psalm of Refuge*

**Psalm 9** “The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble…”

**Psalm 16** “Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge…”

**Psalm 17** “Hear me, Lord; my plea is just. Listen to my cry…”

**Psalm 18** “I love you, Lord, my strength…”

**Psalm 31** “In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame…”

**Psalm 34** “I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips…”

**Psalm 36** “I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: there is no fear of God before their eyes…”

**Psalm 46** “God is our refuge and strength; an ever-present help in trouble…”

**Psalm 61** “Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer…”

**Psalm 71** “In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame…”

**Psalm 91** “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty…”

**Psalm 118** “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever…”

**Psalm 142** “I cry aloud to the Lord; I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy…”

*Other Scripture Related to Immigration and Refugees*

**Genesis 1:26-27** “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image…’”

**Genesis 12:1** “The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people, and your father’s household to the land I will show you…’”

**Exodus 2:15-22** “… Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian…”

**Exodus 22:21** “Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt…”

**Exodus 23:9** “Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels…”

**Leviticus 19:9-18** “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field… leave them for the poor and the foreigner…”

**Leviticus 19:33-34** “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born…”

**Numbers 15:15** “…You and the foreigner shall be the same before the Lord…”

**Deuteronomy 10:18-19** “[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you…”

**Deuteronomy 24:17-22** “Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice…”

**Deuteronomy 27:19** “Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner…”

**Ruth 2** “[Ruth] asked him, ‘Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me – a foreigner?’”

**1 Chronicles 29:14-16** “We are foreigners and strangers in [God’s] sight…”

**Psalm 146** “The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrated the ways of the wicked…”

**Psalm 147:1-6** “… [the Lord] heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds…”

**Proverbs 14:31** “Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker…”

**Proverbs 22:8-9, 16** “Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity…”

**Proverbs 31:8-9** “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves…”

**Isaiah 1:17** “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed…”

**Isaiah 3:14-15** “… ‘What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?’ declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty…”

**Isaiah 10:1-4** “Woe to those who make unjust laws…”

**Jeremiah 7:5-7** “…Change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly…”

**Jeremiah 22:3, 13-17** “This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right… do no wrong or violence to the foreigner…”

**Malachi 3:5** “… ‘I will be quick to testify against… those who deprive foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

**Matthew 2:13-15** “… So he got up, took the child [Jesus] and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt…”

**Matthew 25:31-46** “… The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me…’”

**Luke 4:14-21** “… ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor…’”

**Luke 10:25-37** “Who is my neighbour?”

**Romans 12:13** “Share with the Lord’s people who are in need…”

**Romans 13:1-7** “… The authorities that exist have been established by God…”

**Ephesians 2:11-22** “… For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility…”

**Hebrews 13:1-2** “Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters…”

**James 2:5-9, 14-17** “… God [has] chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith…”

**1 John 3:14-18** “… And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters…”

**1 John 4:7-21** “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God…”

**Prayers**

**Prayer #1**

All-embracing God, no one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care. In your kindness, watch over refugees and exiles.

For those separated from their loved ones when they fled war and conflict, re-unite them and give them protection.

Inspire us to make our churches places of refuge for those in search of safety and peace. Help us to show by our words and our actions the welcome you gave to the strangers you met.

We pray this,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

From the Presbyterian Church of Canada workshop

*Making Connections: Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World.*

**Prayer #2**

God, our creator and sustainer,

you loved us long before we knew ourselves to be lovable

and love us still.

Give us, we pray, a greater awareness of your love for all people,

and a confidence in the action of your grace in us

and in your church.

Grow in us a greater awareness of the oppression

and acts of greed that create refugees.

Give us the courage to welcome the stranger among us

and the wisdom to speak up on their behalf.

We praise you for your mysterious ways among us:

for your presence in the midst of human affairs

even in ways we do not understand.

By the power of your Spirit, may we grow in the truth that compels us to act justly;

giving expression to the compassion of your son Jesus.

We pray in Christ’s name, Amen.

Adapted from *More than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities* by Janet Schaffran

and Pat Kozk. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988, p110.

**Prayer #3**

Lord Jesus, you swept away centuries of prejudice and legalism when you reached out and accepted people as they were.

Help us understand that there is not one of us who deserves your grace, yet you grant to us all, whether Muslims, Jews, Christians or non-Christians; whether believers or non-believers; rich or poor; black or white; status or non-status; the love of God.

Strengthen us Lord, where we are weak, and give us courage to withstand the seduction of a society obsessed with wealth and power. Help us build bridges instead of erecting barriers. Help us live in peace and harmony with your creation where no one is a stranger anymore.

We pray this,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

From the Presbyterian Church of Canada workshop

*Making Connections: Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World.*

**Prayer #4**

Holy God, you are a God on the move.

You move in the world and in our lives.

You shape and direct your creation and us.

Your people have always been on the move.

Moses led your people out of slavery in Egypt.

Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt with Jesus to escape the murderous Kind Herod.

Today people continue to move.

War, poverty, oppression and injustice drive people from their homes and countries.

We pray that you will move with today’s refugees and migrants.

Comfort and sustain them.

For all who serve those forced to move in our world, and for all who are on the move.

We pray this,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

From the Presbyterian Church of Canada workshop

*Making Connections: Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World.*

**Prayer #5**

God of mercy and grace, we see genuine mercy that renews our spirits to right the wrongs in our world, to love the unloved to free the oppressed. Deliver us from cheap grace; grace without repentance, grace without the cross, grace without transformation.

By global comparisons, we are people of power and privilege. Too often we have left politics to politicians, preaching to preachers, and the affairs of other nations to fate. We commit ourselves this day to engage in your world, to hear the cries of your people, certain of the presence of your Holy Spirit leading us.

Loving God, help us understand that you are present with us in every encounter with others whose lives have been touched by death. Help us to listen for your voice God, beneath the human word spoken to us. May we be bearers of life and may we know your life-giving love in our lives.

We pray this,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

From the Presbyterian Church of Canada workshop

*Making Connections: Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World.*

**Prayer #6**

Almighty and merciful God,

whose Son became a refugee

and had no place to call his own;

look with mercy on those who today

are fleeing from danger,

homeless and hungry.

Bless those who work to bring them relief;

inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;

and guide the nations of the world toward that day

when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice

and of peace.

We pray this,

In the name of our God who shares divinity with us,

In the name of our God who shares humanity with us,

In the name of our God who unsettles and inspires us,

We give our praise and thanks. Amen.

From *A Prayer for Refugees.* The first two stanzas of the prayer are from [www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/prayers/](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/prayers/)

***For the Courage to Do Justice***

O Lord,
open our eyes that we may see the needs of refugees;
open our ears that we may hear people's cries for justice;
open our hearts that we may assist sojourners near and far.

Show us
where love, hope and faith are needed.

Use us as ministers of your healing.

Let us not be afraid
to protect the weak because of the anger of the strong,
or to defend the poor because of the power of the rich.

Sustain us so that in these coming days
we may be able to do some work of peace for you.

We ask these things in your blessed name. You taught us to pray....

http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/refugees/rworship.stm

**Call to Worship**

***Leader:*** Lord, we are your gathered people, come together to be one with refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people whose lives have been dislocated by war, famine and injustice. By our presence here we express our solidarity with them in their search for a new life, a new home, a new promise.

***All:*** Lord, clear our eyes that we may see the suffering of the refugee.

Open our ears that we may hear the cries of those deep in despair.

Release our feet that we may walk on paths where some comfort we may spread.

Unloosen our tongues that we might speak your words of hope and love.

Open our hearts that we may be truly hospitable to the stranger in our midst.

From liturgy: *Offering Hospitality to Refugees* www.crcna.org

**Prayer of Confession**

**Leader:** Knowing that our God walks with us in our confusion, our doubts, our failings,

our struggles, we now come humbly before God to ask for mercy.

**Leader:** For the times we fail to offer hospitality to those in our world who suffer

injustice, oppression, and poverty, we pray:

***Response:*** *God, have mercy on us and your people*

**Leader:** For the times we lack courage to address the causes of injustice, oppression and

poverty, we pray to our God:

***Response:*** *God, have mercy on us and on your people.*

**Leader:** For the times we give in to despair and resignation when confronted with the

injustice of our world, we pray to our God:

***Response:*** *God, have mercy on us and on your people.*

**Leader:** For the times we allow our fears to triumph over the call to solidarity, we pray to

our God:

***Response:*** *God, have mercy on us and on your people.*

**All:** Merciful God, receive our petitions. Heal the brokenness in our hearts and in our

world caused by injustice, indifference, selfishness and fear. Open our hearts to hear the

cries of your suffering people. Support us as we seek to respond in solidarity and with

hospitality. Amen.

From liturgy: *Offering Hospitality to Refugees* www.crcna.org

**Affirmation of Faith**

**Leader:** It is the will of God that no one should go away thirsty.

***All:*** *It is the will of God that all who ask will be received.*

**Leader:** It is the will of God that none should be driven out of their homes and communities.

***All:*** *It is the will of God that Christ’s love be available to all the world.*

**Leader:** It is the will of God that we should be light to a waiting and broken world.

***All:*** *It is the will of God that we love the world as Christ has loved us.*

From liturgy: *Offering Hospitality to Refugees* www.crcna.org

**Prayers of Intercession**

***Leader or reader:***

Let us pray for refugees and displaced people throughout the world. Let us pray for those

who have fled (from…) and who are (in…) or other parts of the world.

We especially pray for those known personally to us whom we now name before you

(name aloud the people or community group).

We pray for them in their need for the basic necessities of life – shelter and food. Grant

that they may have the skills and equipment to build shelters and to grow food.

We pray for ourselves that we can also be like Zacchaeus and welcome people into our

homes.

From liturgy: *Offering Hospitality to Refugees* www.crcna.org